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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#) [FJ](#) [AS](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN DOD READOUT ON [FIJI](#) GUARD UNIT
DEPLOYMENT TO IRAQ

REF: A. SUVA 447 AND PREVIOUS

[B](#). USUN NEW YORK 1997

Classified By: PolCouns Woo Lee. Reasons: 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Australian Department of Defense (ADOD) officials told us on August 29 that they were exasperated by Fiji,s threat to renege on its commitment to provide guard units to the UN in Basra and Erbil, and they planned to advise Defense Minister Hill and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) to "call the Fijians, bluff" by holding firm on their refusal to pay the costs associated with equipping Fijian soldiers for duty in Iraq. The Australians believe the costs should properly be paid by the Fijians or the UN. It remains to be seen, however, whether the Minister and the PM will follow ADOD,s advice. End Summary

[1](#)2. (C) ADOD International Policy Division Pacific Branch DG Brigadier Paul Symon and Pacific Director Sari Sutton told us on August 29 that in April 2005 the Fijian ambassador to Australia had asked ADOD to provide GOF troops deploying to Iraq this (northern hemisphere) autumn with military gear, to include everything from socks to body armor to high-fashion sunglasses. Symon declined the request, telling the ambassador that the UN would help with such procurements if the GOF were to submit a request to DPKO. Symon ended the April meeting by telling the ambassador that he would be willing to revisit the issue after the GOF had gotten what equipment it could via DPKO.

[1](#)3. (C) Fast-forward to the week of August 22, when the GOF informed the USG and the UN (reftels) that Fiji was compelled to back out of its commitment to increase its presence in Iraq because the Australians had refused to deliver promised assistance. Symon,s staff made some inquiries and learned from the UN that the GOF had never submitted a request for the basic gear Fijian soldiers needed for service in Iraq. Sutton surmised that GOF officials had deliberately waited until the last minute to announce their problem in order to provoke a crisis that would play the Australians and the Americans off each other and see one of the two pay expenses that would rightfully have been covered by Fiji or the UN. This scenario was plausible, Sutton argued, particularly since the cost of the gear funded by DPKO would have been deducted from the fees the UN was to pay to the GOF for the "inner ring" guard force's service.

[1](#)4. (C) Sutton pointed out that the U.S. and Australia faced two competing objectives in dealing with Fiji. On one hand, she argued, it would be good for us, and for the UN, to have even more Fijian troops in Iraq. On the other hand, we risked creating the expectation in Fiji that the U.S. and Australia would cover costs that the GOF should rightly cover, and for which there is an extant UN funding mechanism, when a given mission was of critical importance.

[1](#)5. (C) Sutton acknowledged that there was a chance the GOA would decide to "roll over" and provide the equipment the Fijians asked for once again. If they did roll, Sutton said, it would be done at the expense of fostering bad behavior on the part of the GOF. Therefore, if either the GOA or the USG agreed to equip the Fijians again, Sutton argued, this time there should at least be conditions attached to ensure that later deployments are properly coordinated, provisioned and funded. Symon said that he would argue to his minister that it is important, "at the very least, that we let the current impasse evolve through its natural course" at the UN to see what the Fijians bring to the table rather than "jump in" with funding in the next 24-48 hours.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment: Sutton and Simon are frustrated by what they see as the GOF's attempt to milk the system and blame the GOA for a problem of its own making. They are eager to cooperate with the U.S. to fix the planning and other systemic issues that led to the current problem. It is uncertain, however, if Minister Hill and the PM will see things the same way as their bureaucrats, or if they will place greater importance in simply ensuring that the Fijian presence in Iraq continues and accede to the Fijian demands.
STANTON